

Education is the key to the future success of our children and promoting long-term economic opportunity across the Valley. Providing access to a high quality and affordable education is essential for our children to compete in today's ever-evolving workforce and to ensure that they can make the kind of living our parents fought to provide our generation. To make good on these goals, our students must have the resources, schools and teachers they need in order to graduate high school prepared for college or their career.

A good education begins early on. As a result, I've fought to support programs like Head Start and Early Head Start in our Valley. For instance, I've worked to secure nearly \$14 million for the Head Start program operated by the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission. I also supported \$3.3 million to strengthen Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Kings County.

I have also fought for additional support to improve Valley schools and universities. During these tough times, many schools faced teacher layoffs and drastic budget cuts. To keep teachers in the classrooms I supported legislation like the Education Jobs and Medicaid Assistance Act. According to the National Education Association, this bill protected over 900 teaching jobs in our district. No one would have felt the effects of those job losses more than Valley students and families.

In addition, I have worked to secure funding for Valley community colleges and universities. This includes funding for West Hills College to create new academic programs in agriculture and water science, and funding for CSU Fresno to recruit and train more students in the field of agriculture education. These programs are double wins for our Valley. Not only do they allow more Valley students to obtain college degrees, but they also train the next generation of leaders to grow our agriculture economy.

One of the most important aspects of improving education is making college affordable. As college tuition has skyrocketed over the past years, a degree from a 2-year or 4-year college has become less obtainable for too many Valley students. To make it easier for Valley students to attend college and secure a good-paying job, I helped pass the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007 which increased Pell Grants and cut student loan interest rates. In 2010, I helped pass a new law that switched all schools to the more efficient Direct Loan program, saving \$61 billion. This new law makes it easier for Valley students to finance their educations and \$19 billion of the savings will go towards reducing the federal deficit.

Investing in our children's education is central to supporting economic development in our Valley and ensuring that we have an educated workforce that will meet the demands and challenges of the 21st century. I will continue working to secure the resources needed to strengthen Valley education and advocate for the greatest standards for our children.